

FREE ISSUE

PREVIEW MONSTER HUNTER RISE

PREVIEW FAR CRY 6

ISSUE 73 DECEMBER 2020



THE LATEST NEWS, REVIEWS, PREVIEWS, AND PLAYING TIPS INSIDE!



# XBOX SERIES X|S

THE LATEST GAMES,  
HARDWARE & MORE



FORZA MOTOSPORT



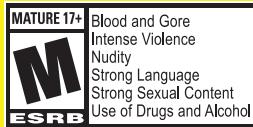
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EVERWILD



PSYCHONAUTS 2



XBOX ONE

PS4

PC

PLAYS GREAT ALSO ON XBOX SERIES X AND PS5

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# CYBERPUNK 2077



11.19.2020

## sections

editorial	6
game on	10
five to play	16
parting shots	50

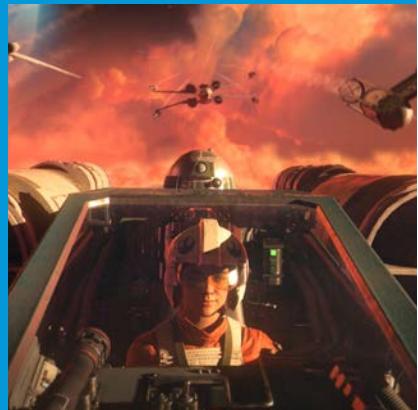


**MONSTER HUNTER RISE** 42



**FAR CRY 6** 44

## review



**STAR WARS: SQUADRONS** 48

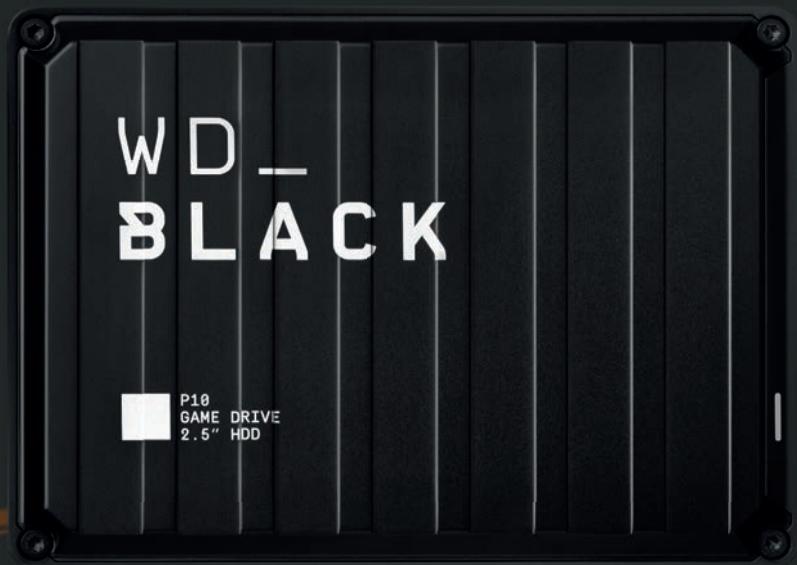
**32**  
**XBOX SERIES**  
Get an in-depth look at the two new consoles from Microsoft.

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# welcome

FROM THE EDITORS



## BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

We, the *Walmart Gamecenter* editorial staff, are officially envious of you, our readers. That's because, as we write these words, we're still a few weeks away from the launch of the PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X/S. As you read them, however, those next-generation consoles will have already been released to the public. Here we are, stuck in the past, communicating to all of you in the glorious 4K, ray-traced future. We hope those of you who've already secured a new console are having a blast playing all the great games out now.

If you're still not sure if you'll be buying a new system, or which one is right for you, you're also in luck. This issue we've got a deep dive on the Xbox Series X and S, Microsoft's powerful new duo of consoles. In addition to a rundown of everything the hardware can do, we've also got an in-depth look at some of the most exciting exclusive games coming to Microsoft's systems in the coming months and years, including the massively exciting *Halo Infinite*. We also highlight some of the

notable and different features Microsoft has brought to this new generation, like its unparalleled emphasis on backward compatibility and the Xbox All Access program. (And if you need even more help deciding if you're ready to upgrade, be sure to check out issue 71—you can snag a digital copy online—for our similar feature on the PlayStation 5.)

Elsewhere in the issue, we've got a preview of *Monster Hunter Rise*, the next entry in the popular action RPG series coming exclusively to Nintendo Switch in March. We also go deep on Ubisoft's *Far Cry 6*, which takes the hit sandbox shooter to Yara, an island struggling to wrest itself free from the grip of a dictator. You can also check out our review of *Star Wars: Squadrons* and an interview with one of the developers behind the spectacular, nostalgia-filled remake *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 1 + 2*.

Issue 73 also marks the final edition of *Walmart Gamecenter* of 2020. We hope you have a wonderful holiday season filled with plenty of great games and a relaxing new year. We know we're all excited to find out what 2021 has in store for the world of gaming. Will E3 make a big comeback, or will the shift to digital events become the

future of the industry? What exciting games will be announced for Sony and Microsoft's new consoles, and what surprises does Nintendo have up its sleeve?

If the past 12 months have taught us anything, it's to expect the unexpected. Still, no matter what next year has in store, you can count on *Walmart Gamecenter* to keep you at the center of all things gaming.

Josh Harmon and Mollie L Patterson  
**EDITORS**

If you're still not sure if you'll be buying a new system, or which one is right for you, you're also in luck.



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Destruction AllStars



Sackboy: A Big Adventure



Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales



Returnal



Horizon Forbidden West



Ratchet & Clank: Rift Apart

Software titles shown are sold separately and may release in 2020 or 2021.

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## GET THE ULTIMATE MORTAL KOMBAT 11 EXPERIENCE

**M**odeled in arcades in 1992 as a rival to Capcom's smash hit *Street Fighter II*, *Mortal Kombat* grew from a quirky game based around digitized photos of real actors to one of the biggest fighting game franchises in the world.

All of those years of history have culminated in *Mortal Kombat 11*, which has gone on to become the fastest-selling title in franchise history, with more than 8 million copies sold according to publisher Warner Bros. Games. And now, for those who want the complete *Mortal Kombat 11* experience, or for anyone who has yet to jump into this latest chapter, Warner Bros. Games and developer NetherRealm Studios have announced *Mortal Kombat 11 Ultimate*.



Offering "the definitive *Mortal Kombat 11* experience," *Mortal Kombat 11 Ultimate* brings together the previously released main game, *Mortal Kombat 11: Aftermath* expansion, and both DLC character packs, Kombat Pack 1 and Kombat Pack 2.

Even if you've already played the core *Mortal Kombat 11* game, *Ultimate* offers a wide array of post-launch content that has made it bigger and better. That's especially true with the game's latest expansion, Kombat Pack 2, which adds three more characters to the roster: the much-requested return of Kitana's half-Edenian, half-Tarkatan clone and "sister" Mileena; the royal Edenian demigod Rain; and the surprising arrival of the iconic Special Forces soldier John Rambo. And, even better, Rambo is voiced by none other than Sylvester Stallone himself.

When *Mortal Kombat 11 Ultimate* hits for PlayStation 4, Xbox One, and Nintendo

**...the fastest-selling title in franchise history, with more than 8 million copies sold.**

Switch, two brand-new versions of the game will be coming along for the ride.

With this release, *Mortal Kombat 11* is making the jump to the next generation of consoles, as *Ultimate* will also bring the battle to the Xbox Series X/S and PlayStation 5. Specific to those versions, *Mortal Kombat 11 Ultimate* will feature 4K dynamic resolution, enhanced visuals, and significantly improved load times, and will be fully cross-platform and cross-gen compatible. Best of all, you don't need to wait to pick up *Mortal Kombat 11 Ultimate* if you won't be getting a new console for a while, as free upgrades will be offered from PlayStation 4 to PlayStation 5, and from Xbox One to Xbox Series X/S.

*Mortal Kombat 11 Ultimate* releases on November 17th for Xbox Series X/S, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, PlayStation 4, Nintendo Switch, and PC. Pick up your own copy on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.

**999**

New maximum Trophy level possible after recent changes Sony made to the PlayStation Trophy system

**1.6 billion**

Hours players have spent in Xbox Game Studios titles in 2020 (as of October 2020)

**2015**

Year talks started to bring *Minecraft* characters to the world of *Super Smash Bros.*

**17 million**

Number of times mobile game *Genshin Impact* was downloaded in its first four days

**60°-120°**

Selectable range for *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*'s new field of view (FOV) slider



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## 4. Redeem

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## Walmart Gamecenter release calendar

NOV

**19** CYBERPUNK 2077  
CD PROJEKT / XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

DEC

**20** HYRULE WARRIORS: AGE OF CALAMITY  
NINTENDO / SWITCH

**24** WATCH DOGS: LEGION  
UBISOFT / PS5

**1** EMPIRE OF SIN  
PARADOX INTERACTIVE / XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH, PC

**3** IMMORTALS FENYX RISING  
UBISOFT / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH, PC

**4** FITNESS BOXING 2: RHYTHM & EXERCISE  
NINTENDO / SWITCH

**8** PUYO PUYO TETRIS 2  
SEGA / XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH



JAN

**20** HITMAN 3  
IO INTERACTIVE / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

FEB

**21** PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME REMAKE  
UBISOFT / XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

**21** RIDE 4  
MILESTONE / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5

**2** OUTRIDERS  
SQUARE ENIX / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

**4** WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE - EARTHBLOOD  
NACON / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC



## THE PLAYSTATION SWITCH

By the time you're reading this issue of *Walmart Gamecenter*, you might already be playing amazing next-generation gaming experiences on a shiny new PlayStation 5. And yet, while you may have learned all you think there is to know about Sony's latest console, we've got an interesting bit of information you might not have heard about. Who knows—maybe one day it'll even help you win a round of trivia.

While most gamers around the globe would tell you that the Cross button on a PlayStation controller is typically used to confirm a decision, and Circle to cancel, that hasn't been the case in Japan (and some other Asian territories). Over in Sony's home country, *maru* (circle) is a universal symbol for "right," with *batsu* (cross) meaning "wrong."

So, ever since 1994's original PlayStation, the functions of those buttons have



been the opposite of what they've been in most of the world. Or, to be more exact, Japan's layout was the *original* correct layout, which was then swapped when the PlayStation went overseas.

Now, however, with the PlayStation 5, those buttons have been reversed in Japan as well, to align with the standard used by most other players. It's a small step for consistency, but a potentially large hurdle for Japanese gamers who now have to retrain their brains after 26 years of playing games the old way.

## FEEL THE XBOX DIFFERENCE

While writing the above story, we asked ourselves, "Why let the PlayStation 5 have all of the trivia fun?" So, in the pursuit of equal time, let us also point out something you might not realize about your fancy new Xbox Series X. Microsoft and the Xbox team have been working for years to make their consoles more inclusive to those who might have physical conditions that present accessibility challenges when gaming. Microsoft Devices inclusive lead Bryce Johnson recently pointed out the latest example of those efforts.

On the back of every Xbox Series X are six ports: power, HDMI, two USB, Ethernet, and the

storage expansion slot. For each of those ports, the Xbox team has added tactile indicators, unique sequences of little bumps that allow you to instantly know which port is which simply by touch. Not only is the addition of those indicators helpful to gamers with reduced vision, but they'll come in handy to any of us who have ever struggled to

reach back and plug cables into a console that can't easily be turned around.

So, if you're looking at the back of an Xbox Series X, and wonder what those extra little dots are for, now you know.





## HUGE WORLD CHANGES COMING TO MINECRAFT IN CAVES & CLIFFS

During Minecraft Live 2020, developer Mojang offered a peek into the coming future of *Minecraft*—and the next major update will literally be earth changing.

In the Caves & Cliffs Update, a number of major adjustments are coming to how *Minecraft* generates its world. The first area being addressed is mountains, which was the winner of a vote last year for the biome players most wanted updated. Now, mountains will not only be more detailed, but also feature height-dependant generation, meaning tall mountains may have more snow and ice, but fewer trees, the higher you go up.

**"We have been dreaming about this [update] for so long. So, it was important to do it right."**

**LEAD GAMEPLAY DEVELOPER AGNES LARSSON**

Speaking of snow, a new block type being added is powder snow. While it looks like a regular snow block, it can pose a hazard for both players and mobs, as you'll sink down through powder snow if you attempt to walk across it. And what would mountains be without goats, a new animal spawn coming to the game that can jump high distances and headbutt other animals (or unlucky players).

Even more exciting are the changes coming to caves. Now, caves in *Minecraft* can have biomes of their own, with the first two shown off being Lush and Dripstone.

Lush cave biomes bring a beautiful green twist to cave structures, with vines growing glow berries, spore blossoms releasing their pollen into the air, and Dripleaf plants creating platforms for reaching higher locations. Meanwhile, Dripstone caves will be rich with stalagmites and stalactites, which can both act as sources of water and dangers should they fall onto you—or you onto them.

The Caves & Cliffs Update will provide plenty of other changes big and small as well. Caves will now have their own local water levels, meaning underground rivers, lakes, and waterfalls will flow much more realistically. Copper will be added as a new resource, and when used as a building block, it'll oxidize over time, slowly turning green. Players will be able to build lightning rods and candles, the terrifying new Warden mob will hunt prey based on nearby vibrations, and Sculk Sensors will allow for a huge breakthrough in building: wireless redstone.

"We have been dreaming about this [update] for so long. So, it was important to do it right," said lead gameplay developer Agnes Larsson on the changes coming in the Caves & Cliffs Update. "We've spent the time we need to really understand the visions we have for the update, and also to make sure we understand what the community actually wants."

These changes, and many others, will be coming to *Minecraft* when the Caves & Cliff Update arrives next summer. If you haven't already, pick up your copy of *Minecraft* on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.



## NEW CAST DETAILS FOR RESIDENT EVIL FILM REBOOT

After six movies spread across 15 years, Paul W. S. Anderson's *Resident Evil* cinematic universe has come to an end, paving the way for a live-action reboot of Capcom's beloved horror franchise.

Constantin Film's new project seems to be geared toward presenting a more faithful adaptation of its video game source materials. According to industry media outlet *Deadline*, the movie will be set in Raccoon City's Spencer Mansion back in 1998, with writer-director Johannes Roberts wanting to "go back to the original [two] games and re-create the terrifying visceral experience" he had while playing them.

Also according to *Deadline*, a number of casting choices have already been made, which gives us a hint at just how connected the movie will be to the games. Joining the cast will be Robbie Amell (*Upload*) as Chris Redfield, Hannah John-Kamen (*Ant-Man and the Wasp*) as Jill Valentine, Avan Jogia (*Zombieland: Double Tap*) as Leon S. Kennedy, Kaya Scodelario (*Maze Runner*) as Claire Redfield, and Tom Hopper (*The Umbrella Academy*) as Albert Wesker.

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1

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## CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS COLD WAR

PUBLISHER ACTIVISION / DEVELOPER TEREARCH, RAVEN SOFTWARE / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 11.13.2020

"Cold War is set in the '80s and is a direct sequel to the first *Black Ops*. The 1980s was one of the most dangerous periods in history, with two superpowers in a nuclear arms race that threatened the whole world, and the Cold War fits perfectly as a sequel to the themes established in the first *Black Ops*. We also wanted to take the action-packed *Call of Duty* thrill ride and infuse it with more player influence and control. We start with the player creating their own character and then layer in player choice moments in a few missions as well as allowing them to unlock some optional side missions. We also wanted to give people who like to play up close and personal a few more options, so we've added a body shield mechanic where you can grab an enemy and use them to shield yourself while continuing to fire your weapon."

— DAN VONDRAK, CREATIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE CAMPAIGN, RAVEN SOFTWARE

The *Cold War* fits perfectly as a sequel to the **themes established in the first *Black Ops*.**

# MORTAL KOMBAT™ ULTIMATE



BEST VALUE	MORTAL KOMBAT 11 ULTIMATE	KOMBAT PACK 2	MORTAL KOMBAT 11: AFTERMATH	KOMBAT PACK 1
<b>MORTAL KOMBAT 11 ULTIMATE</b>	<b>KOMBAT PACK 2</b>	<b>MORTAL KOMBAT 11: AFTERMATH</b>	<b>KOMBAT PACK 1</b>	
<b>Includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mortal Kombat 11 Base Game</li><li>• Kombat Pack 2</li><li>• Mortal Kombat 11: Aftermath</li><li>• Kombat Pack 1</li></ul>	<b>Includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kombat Pack 2</li><li>• 3 New Playable Characters<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mileena</li><li>• Rain</li><li>• Rambo</li></ul></li></ul>	<b>Includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mortal Kombat 11: Aftermath</li><li>• All-New Cinematic Story</li><li>• 3 New Playable Characters<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sheeva, Fujin and RoboCop</li></ul></li><li>• 3 New Skin Packs</li></ul>	<b>Includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kombat Pack 1</li><li>• Shang Tsung, Nightwolf, Terminator, Sindel, The Joker and Spawn</li><li>• 6 Skin Packs and 7 Exclusive Skins</li></ul>	
INCLUDED IN MK11 ULTIMATE	INCLUDED IN MK11 ULTIMATE	INCLUDED IN MK11 ULTIMATE	INCLUDED IN MK11 ULTIMATE	



Blood and Gore  
Intense Violence  
Strong Language

In-Game Purchases / Users Interact

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2.

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## MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN: MILES MORALES

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT / DEVELOPER INSOMNIAC GAMES / PLATFORMS PS5, PS4 / RELEASE DATE 11.12.2020

Nine years after debuting in *Ultimate Comics: Fallout*, the Miles Morales version of Spidey is headlining his first action game with this spin-off of 2018's *Marvel's Spider-Man*. Set a year later, *Miles Morales* finds the titular hero in the early days of his wall-crawling career, kind of like he was in *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. But while Miles has some of the same abilities as the O.G. Spidey, Peter Parker—web shooting, bad-guy punching, open-world exploring—Miles also has an energy attack called his Venom Strike, as well as the ability to blend into the background like a whitebanded crab spider. All of these skills will come in handy when a war between the corrupt corporation Roxxon and the Tinkerer's criminal army, Underground, turns Miles' adopted home of Harlem and the rest of New York City into a war zone. It's up to Miles to perform community outreach.

Miles has an energy attack called his **Venom Strike**, as well as the ability to **blend into the background** like a whitebanded crab spider.

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"8.5!" -Air Entertainment



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EVERYONE to TEEN





## CYBERPUNK 2077

PUBLISHER CD PROJEKT / DEVELOPER CD PROJEKT RED / PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 11.12.2020

Inspired by the classic table-top role-playing game *Cyberpunk*, this open world, first-person sci-fi RPG is set in a fictional California city where corporations and gangs are fighting it out for control, and everyone is armed and ready. Made by the same people as 2015's *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, the game offers a similar level of depth, player choice, and customization, just in ways that are more *Blade Runner* than *The Lord of the Rings*. While you still have to pick out what you're going to wear and what weapons to use—blades or bullets, you decide—it'll also have you choosing what kind of upgrades to buy for your cybernetic implants. It also has an ending that's influenced by the choices you make, and even the missions you fail. And don't miss Gen X icon Keanu Reeves, who plays a prominent character in the unfolding storyline.

Made by the same people as 2015's *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, the game offers a similar level of depth, player choice, and customization.



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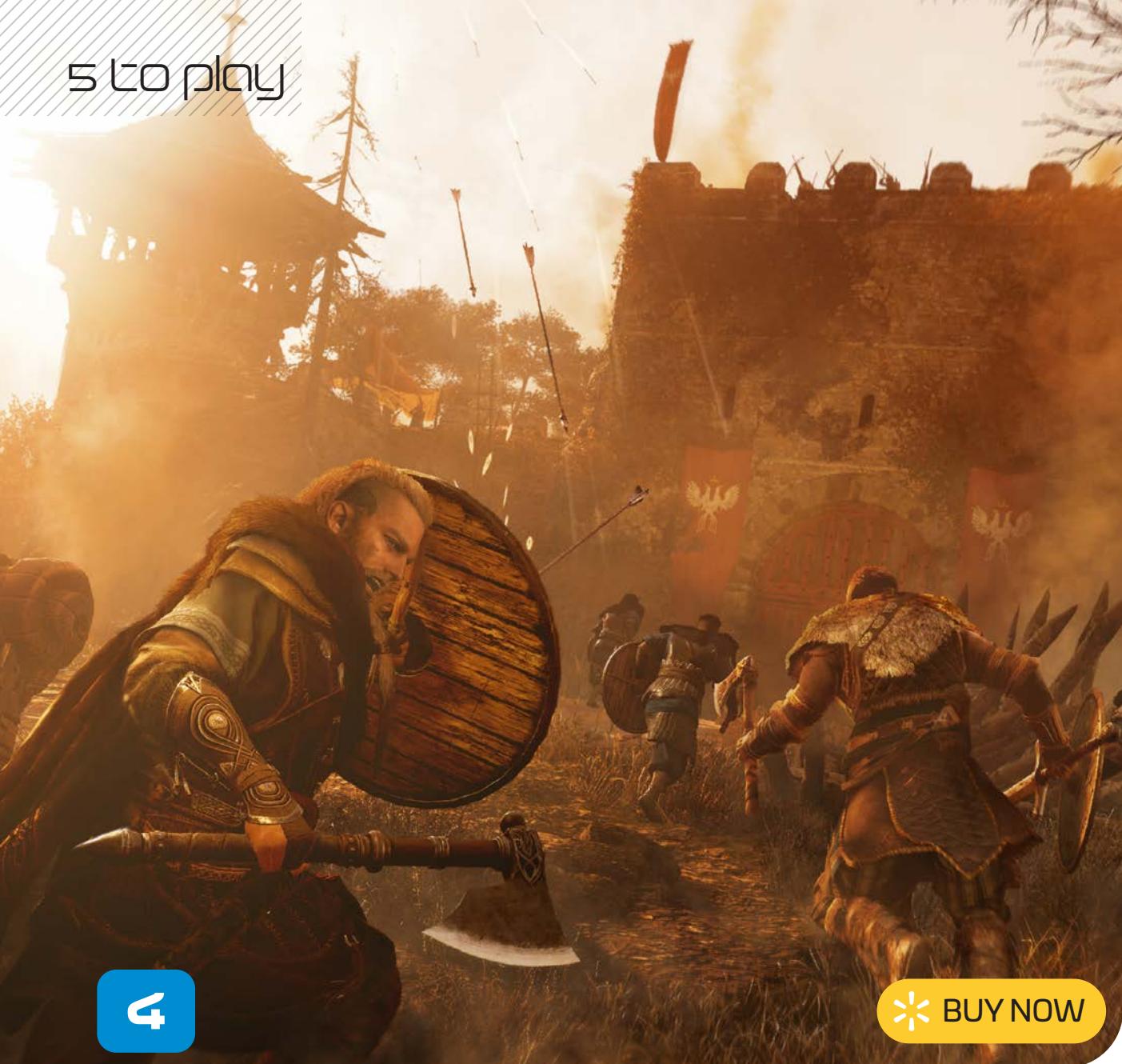
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## ASSASSIN'S CREED VALHALLA

PUBLISHER UBISOFT / DEVELOPER UBISOFT MONTREAL / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 11.10.2020, 11.12.2020 (PS5)

"*Valhalla* is set in the 9th century, during the biggest invasion of England by Vikings. From Norway to England, the game will tell a grounded, intimate, and deeply personal exploration of a Viking raider's life, their culture, values, and motivations. To do this, we're taking a very different approach with the narrative structure, which allows players to embark on different narrative journeys. These individual sagas are complete story arcs, lasting several hours, and with a wide cast of characters, deep interpersonal relations, and storytelling based on a variety of themes. *Valhalla*'s combat changes were also inspired by the Vikings, who were versatile fighters and had exceptional skills in close combat and unique weaponry. But our hero also learns from the Assassins during the game, which expands his skill set. You even have a Viking longship, which lets you transport groups of raiders in order to attack locations near water."

Our hero also learns from the Assassins during the game, which expands his skill set.

BENOIT RICHER, GAME DIRECTOR CO-DEV, UBISOFT MONTREAL

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5



PREORDER

## HYRULE WARRIORS: AGE OF CALAMITY

PUBLISHER NINTENDO / DEVELOPER KOEI TECMO, OMEGA FORCE / PLATFORMS SWITCH / RELEASE DATE 11.20.2020

Like the original *Hyrule Warriors*, *Age of Calamity* is a hack-and-slash action game that has you taking on a seemingly endless number of enemies in a style far more reminiscent of *Dynasty Warriors* than *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*. Set a hundred years before *Wild*, *Calamity* has you cutting your way through Link's homeland during The Great Calamity, a massive war referenced in *Wild* in which the armies of Hyrule faced the forces of Ganon. Not only will players get to slice and dice hordes of Bokoblins and Lynels as Link, Zelda, and many other characters from this ongoing saga, but they'll also have to solve puzzles and master the Sheikah Slate tablet. And yes, it will, like the original, make good use of your amiibo figures.

Set a hundred years before *Wild*, *Calamity* has you cutting your way through Link's homeland during The Great Calamity.

LOADED WITH EXTRAS FOR XBOX SERIES X!

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# HOT HARDWARE & COLLECTIBLES



## XBOX SERIES X / S

Play thousands of games from four generations of Xbox with the console that best fits your playstyle. Experience the fastest, most powerful Xbox ever with Xbox Series X, or go all-digital with Xbox Series S, the smallest, sleekest Xbox ever made.\* Next-gen performance comes in all sizes.

\*Xbox Series S: Use with digital games only; console does not play physical discs.



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The Xbox Elite Wireless Controller Series 2 features over 30 new ways to play like a pro, including adjustable-tension thumbsticks, new interchangeable components, up to 40 hours of rechargeable battery life, and limitless customization with the Xbox Accessories app on Xbox One and Windows 10.\*

\*Battery life varies significantly with additional accessories, usage, and other factors. Testing conducted by Microsoft using preproduction units. [xbox.com/elitebattery](http://xbox.com/elitebattery). Xbox Accessories app features – including button mapping and profile configuration – are only available on Xbox One and Windows 10. Compatible with Xbox Series X, Xbox Series S, Xbox One X, Xbox One S, Xbox One, Windows 10, Android, iOS. Operating system updates: may be required. Go to [xboxone/controller-OS](http://xbox.com/xboxone/controller-OS) for more information.

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#### **Breathtaking Immersion**

Discover a deeper gaming experience with support for haptic feedback, adaptive triggers, and 3D Audio technology.



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Feel physically responsive feedback to your in-game actions with dual actuators which replace traditional rumble motors. In your hands, these dynamic vibrations can simulate the feeling of everything from environments to the recoil of different weapons.

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<sup>1</sup>Available when feature is supported by game.



## NINTENDO SWITCH™ LITE

Introducing Nintendo Switch™ Lite, a new version of the Nintendo Switch system that's optimized for personal, handheld play. Nintendo Switch Lite is a small and light Nintendo Switch system at a great price. With a built-in +Control Pad, and a sleek, unibody design, Nintendo Switch Lite is great for on-the-go gaming. Nintendo Switch Lite is compatible with popular games such as Super Mario Odyssey™, Mario Kart™ 8 Deluxe, Super Smash Bros.™ Ultimate, The Legend of Zelda™: Breath of the Wild, and more. If you're looking for a gaming system all your own, Nintendo Switch Lite is ready to hit the road whenever you are.



## NINTENDO SWITCH - NEON BLUE/RED

Nintendo Switch is the hybrid home video game system from Nintendo. In addition to providing single and multiplayer thrills at home, the Nintendo Switch system can be taken on the go so players can enjoy a full home console experience anytime, anywhere. The mobility of a handheld is now added to the power of a home gaming system, with unprecedented new play styles brought to life by the two new Joy-Con controllers.

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Built for your next victory, your latest achievement and much more is the Recon 70 gaming headset for Nintendo Switch™. The lightweight and comfortable design is perfect for hours of play, and the high-quality 40mm speakers and over-ear premium synthetic leather cushions let you hear every crisp high and thundering low while blocking noise. The high-sensitivity mic ensures you are heard clearly on Switch games that support in-game chat capability, and it easily flips up to mute. Also works great with PlayStation®, Xbox, PC, and compatible mobile devices.



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The Arctis 1 is an all-platform gaming headset that doubles as your on-the-go headphones. With the same high-quality speaker drivers as the award-winning Arctis 7, a detachable microphone, and sleek low-profile design, the Arctis 1 is made for all gaming platforms, so you can enjoy the award-winning performance of Arctis no matter where you are.



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## RDS

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NINTENDO  
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Fantasy Violence

Produced by  
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Game and systems sold separately. Nintendo Switch Lite plays all games that support handheld mode.

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# HYRULE WARRIORS

## Age of Calamity

JOIN THE BATTLE FOR HYRULE 100 YEARS BEFORE  
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA™: BREATH OF THE WILD GAME

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STORY SCENES  
SHED LIGHT ON  
NEW AND FAMILIAR  
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BATTLE HORDES OF  
HYRULE'S MOST  
FORMIDABLE FOES

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PLAY AS CHARACTERS  
LIKE LINK, ZELDA  
AND MORE



# XBOX SERIES X & S

## XBOX IS DOUBLING DOWN ON ITS NEXT-GEN HARDWARE

BY THE WALMART GAMECENTER EDITORS



In the ever-evolving gaming industry, Xbox has arguably adapted better and more fluidly than its biggest competitors. Zeroing in on a winning strategy, Xbox focused on its customers with programs and features like Xbox Game Pass, backward compatibility, and cross-platform play. Now, it's looking to bring its two-pronged approach of hardware advancements and consumer-friendly options to the next generation of consoles.

Microsoft is doing this by thinking outside of the box—and offering us two boxes. Yes, Microsoft has launched two entirely different next-gen consoles this fall: the Xbox Series X and Xbox Series S. In order to help you decide which console is right for you, we're going to break down everything you need to know to get into next-gen Xbox gaming.

### XBOX SERIES X

We'll start with Microsoft's flagship next-gen console, the Xbox Series X. Besides just looking like the beefiest console ever made, with its boxy, imposing figure, the Xbox Series X boasts the kinds of features and horsepower you want for next-gen gaming.

Instead of focusing on the actual hardware specs here (you can find those in the sidebar), let's go over what this console can do. First off, the Series X is built from the ground up to run games in 4K at 60 frames per second (FPS) with support for up to 120 FPS at lower resolutions.

This puts its capabilities on par with most current high-end PCs, and far exceeds what the Xbox One X—which has to choose between visual quality (4K) or performance (60 FPS)—

**Microsoft** is *thinking outside of the box*—and offering us **two** boxes.

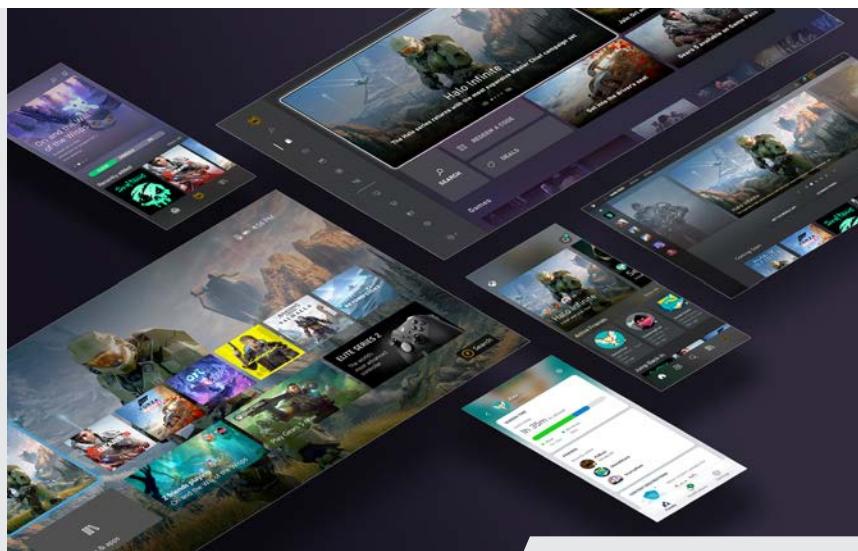
can do. Not to mention new ray-traced lighting capabilities will enable more realistic reflections and shadows.

The unsung hero of the Xbox Series X, however, is Microsoft's new Velocity Architecture. Utilizing a super-fast solid-state drive (SSD), the Series X can transfer data more quickly than ever before, resulting in faster load times and near-instant asset streaming. It also means that players can jump back and forth between multiple games at the click of a button with the Quick Resume feature.

## XBOX SERIES S

In some ways, the Xbox Series S is a more surprising console than the Xbox Series X. Sure, it might not have the raw GPU power of the Series X, but its processing power is about the same, delivering insanely fast load times, ray tracing, 1440p resolution, and up to 120 FPS. What makes the Series S so surprising is that it packs that power into the smallest and most affordable next-gen console launching this holiday season, coming in at the same price point as the previous-generation Xbox One S. This means that you won't have to break the bank in order to enjoy the faster processing of next-gen gaming, and you won't need to buy a 4K TV, either.

The other aspect of the Series S that sets it apart from the Series X is that it's digital-only. That means every game you play you'll need to download, which is perfect if you plan on getting an Xbox Game Pass subscription (more on that later).



The new Xbox UI should look largely familiar, but with a few key changes.



## SIDE BY SIDE

### SERIES X

CPU	8-CORE AMD ZEN 2 CPU @ 3.8GHZ
3.6GHZ W/ SMT ENABLED	
GPU	AMD RDNA 2 GPU
52 CUS @ 1.825GHZ	
GPU POWER	12.15 TFLOPS
RAM	16GB GDDR6
10GB @ 560 GB/S	
6GB @ 336 GB/S	
PERFORMANCE TARGET	4K @ 60 FPS, UP TO 120 FPS
STORAGE	1TB PCLE GEN 4 NVME SSD
2.4GB/S UNCOMPRESSED	
4.8GB/S COMPRESSED	
DISC DRIVE	4K UHD BLU-RAY
DISPLAY OUT	HDMI 2.1

### SERIES S

CPU	8-CORE AMD ZEN 2 CPU @ 3.6GHZ
3.4GHZ W/ SMT ENABLED	
GPU	AMD RDNA 2 GPU
20 CUS @ 1.565GHZ	
GPU POWER	4 TFLOPS
RAM	10GB GDDR6
8GB @ 224 GB/S	
2GB @ 56 GB/S	
PERFORMANCE TARGET	1440P @ 60 FPS, UP TO 120 FPS
STORAGE	512GB PCLE GEN 4 NVME SSD
2.4GB/S UNCOMPRESSED	
4.8GB/S COMPRESSED	
DISC DRIVE	DIGITAL ONLY
DISPLAY OUT	HDMI 2.1

# ACCESSORIES, BACKWARD COMPATIBILITY, & ALL ACCESS

XBOX'S CONSUMER-FRIENDLY APPROACH CONTINUES INTO NEXT-GEN

Xbox is making moving into next-gen gaming easier than ever. Microsoft has made several key decisions that will minimize the amount you'll need to spend while also making sure you have a full library of games to enjoy once you get your Xbox Series X or S.

#### New (and New Again) Controllers

Both the Xbox Series X and S come with the updated Xbox controller. The new controller maintains the same winning shape as the Xbox One controller with a few enhancements. The updated D-pad offers better directional control, the share button makes it easier to capture highlight clips, and the textured triggers and bumpers will keep your fingers firmly planted where you need them. However, if you prefer your Xbox One controller, Xbox Elite Controller, or Xbox Adaptive Controller, those accessories are fully compatible with Xbox Series X and S, too. That's

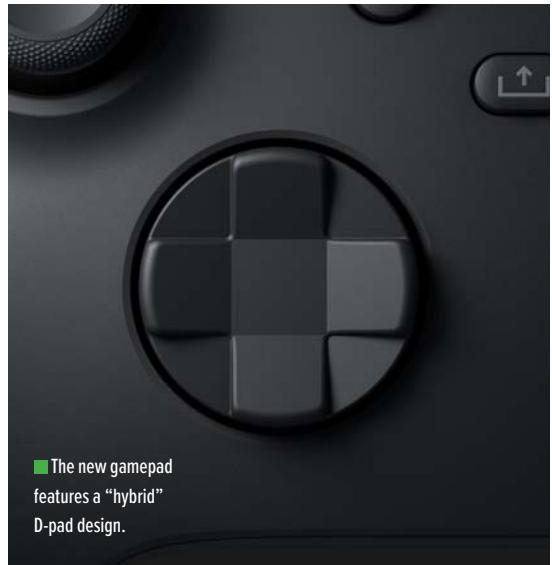
especially useful if you have a player two at home, as you won't need to go run out and buy another new controller to enjoy co-op action.

#### Backward Compatibility

One of the biggest advantages of the Xbox Series X and S is that all of your Xbox One games, plus Xbox 360 and original Xbox games that are already backward compatible, are playable on the Xbox Series X and S. In fact, most of these games automatically take advantage of the next-gen consoles' hardware, especially the Xbox Series X, which works particularly well with games that don't have locked frame rates. Experience old favorites in 4K at 60 FPS thanks to Xbox's backward compatibility program.

#### Xbox All Access

The Xbox All Access program is a great way to get into next-gen gaming if you don't want to pay for



The new gamepad features a “hybrid” D-pad design.



it all at once. For a low monthly rate, you not only will get an Xbox Series X or S, but also a subscription to Xbox Game Pass Ultimate, which gives you access to the entire Xbox Game Pass library plus an Xbox Live subscription, so you can play online with your friends. If you want to take advantage of the All Access program, check with your local Walmart or visit Walmart.com for more details.

An expandable storage slot allows you to increase your internal storage space without taking the console apart.



# HALO INFINITE

PUBLISHER XBOX GAME STUDIOS DEVELOPER 343 INDUSTRIES RELEASE DATE 2021

When a series lasts as long as *Halo*, there's always going to be a schism in what players want from a sequel. Do you cater to the old-school fans or newer players?

*Halo Infinite*'s answer to this age-old question is to pretty much redefine what the *Halo* experience is and strike a balance between the past and the present.

The first clue that developer 343 Industries is honoring the wishes of the series' older fans is Master Chief himself. Yes, the most recognizable helmeted hero in video game history is back in the spotlight in *Halo Infinite*, without another fireteam of Spartans hunting him down. This time, Master Chief has arrived on Zeta Halo where the Banished (a splinter group of the Covenant that debuted in *Halo Wars 2*) and its leader, War Chief Escharum, have set up shop.

**Do you cater to the old-school fans or newer players? *Halo Infinite*'s answer to this age-old question is to redefine what the *Halo* experience is.**

As a setting, *Infinite*'s Zeta is reminiscent of the original *Halo* from *Combat Evolved*. The biggest difference, however, is that Zeta is much more open for exploration. Instead of following a linear mission structure, players will be able to travel to anywhere on Zeta that they can see, and while there will of course be a main story, there will also be side objectives to discover.

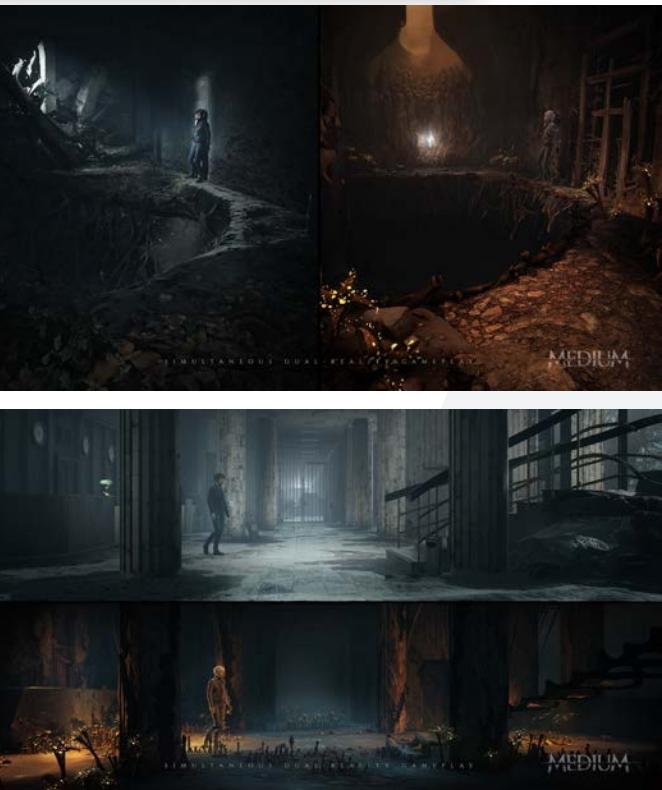
In terms of its gameplay, *Halo Infinite* carries on the theme of compromise between the old and the new. Master Chief's weapons and movement seem to be inspired by Bungie's *Halo* games, but he does

Master Chief is back doing what he does best: fighting aliens on a big space ring.

have a few new tricks up his armored sleeve. The most obvious change is Master Chief's access to a wrist-mounted grappling hook, which he can use to traverse the environment, close the distance between himself and enemies, and pull objects like explosive barrels to him (which he can then chuck at the Banished).

While *Halo Infinite* will launch on the Xbox One, it's taking full advantage of the Xbox Series X and S. The consoles' Velocity Architecture will be able to quickly render Zeta in all its glory, and its advanced AMD GPU will keep the game running at a consistent 60 FPS in 4K.





## THE MEDIUM

PUBLISHER BLOOBER TEAM DEVELOPER BLOOBER TEAM RELEASE DATE 12.10.2020

Among the exclusives coming to the next generation of Xbox is *The Medium*, a new horror game from Polish developer Bloober Team. Ever since she was young, Marianne has been able to travel between two existences: the real world, and the spirit realm. Now, haunted by visions of a child's death, Marianne heads

off to seek answers in an abandoned hotel. While there have been other horror games to play out in multiple dimensions, *The Medium* uses the power of the new Xbox hardware to render both the real world and the spirit world at the exact same time. In order to find the truth, Marianne will need to explore both versions of the

hotel, at times completing tasks such as unlocking a blocked path in one world by finding the solution in the other. And, she'll have to do all this while also dealing with a host of monstrous enemies—including the horrific entity known as The Maw.

## SENUA'S SAGA: HELLBLADE II

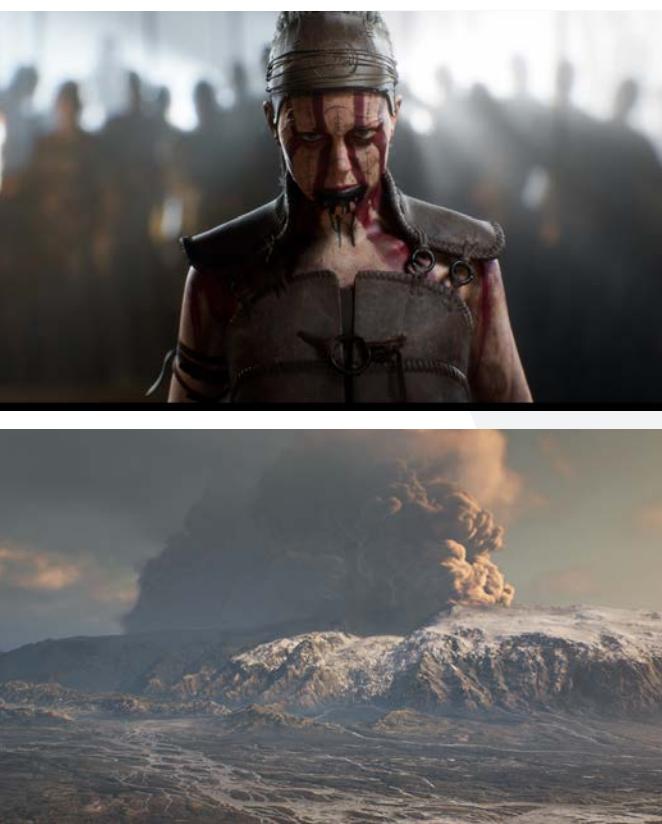
PUBLISHER XBOX GAME STUDIOS DEVELOPER NINJA THEORY RELEASE DATE TBD

In 2017, *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* became one of the greatest underdog stories in all of gaming. Developer Ninja Theory pulled the action game together on a relatively tight budget, but what truly made it worth rooting for was the studio's empathetic approach to sensitive subject matter. Senua, the young Scottish warrior at the heart of the story, wasn't just fighting Norse invaders. She also struggled with what she believed to be a curse—actually mental illness.

Now, one studio acquisition later, Ninja Theory is continuing the story with the full financial support of Xbox Game Studios. *Hellblade II* fol-



lows our heroine, who's now learned to accept the curse as a part of her, on a journey to 9th century Iceland. Further story details are scarce, but given the setting and the plot of the first game, it appears likely Senua will take the fight to the Norsemen who once invaded her home, crossing the sea to repay the favor. This time, she may even have an army of her own.



# EVERWILD

PUBLISHER XBOX GAME STUDIOS DEVELOPER RARE RELEASE DATE TBA

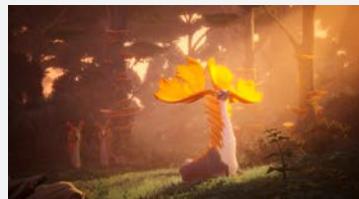
Between *Perfect Dark*, *Banjo-Kazooie*, and *Sea of Thieves*, Rare has a pretty long history of launching industry-changing games. Now, the first-party Xbox studio is looking to once again capture the magic (literally) with *Everwild* on Xbox Series X and S.

The truth is that Rare has yet to reveal much about *Everwild* and how it will play, but we can make some educated guesses based on what we've seen so far—and Rare's previous work.

We do know that *Everwild* will feature magical abilities that seem to be connected to the surreal natural world in which the game takes place. Trailers have shown

player characters interacting with the wildlife in this world in interesting ways, such as using a friendly badger-walrus thing to bring down a tree for its firewood.

We can also guess that, like *Sea of Thieves*, *Everwild* will let friends team up to explore the world together, as trailers have shown multiple player characters traveling, performing rituals, and resting at campfires together.



# BRIGHT MEMORY: INFINITE

PUBLISHER PLAYISM DEVELOPER FYQD-STUDIO RELEASE DATE 2021

You may never have heard of *Bright Memory: Infinite* before, but trust us, it's a game you're going to want to know. Based on the original *Bright Memory* indie project developed by a single person, *Infinite* is a fast-action shooter that mixes first-person gunplay with intense melee combat. In the futuristic world of 2036, the Supernatural Science Research Organisation sends out a group of agents to investigate mysterious occurrences that have been breaking out around the world. One of those agents is Shelia, a female agent who is not only skilled at both firearms and swords, but who also wields a variety of supernatural abilities.

*Bright Memory: Infinite*'s gameplay looks both challenging and exhilarating, as players can run along walls, fire off rounds at Shelia's paranormal foes, then grapple in close to finish them off with some satisfying swings of her sword. Even better, *Bright Memory: Infinite* is looking just as impressive on a technical and visual level, making for a perfect title to push the power of the Xbox Series X and S.



## AVOWED

PUBLISHER XBOX GAME STUDIOS DEVELOPER OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT RELEASE DATE TBD



While *Grounded* was an unexpected (but pleasant) surprise from Obsidian Entertainment, the developer is best known for its long list of epic RPGs. Lucky for us, Obsidian is already working hard on a tale that only a new generation of gaming hardware could tell. Part of the studio's *Pillars of Eternity* universe, *Avowed* will be a first-person RPG in which you'll need to wield both sword and sorcery—sometimes even simultaneously, it seems—in order to save the land from unknown evils.

## FORZA MOTORSPORT

PUBLISHER XBOX GAME STUDIOS DEVELOPER TURN 10 STUDIOS RELEASE DATE TBD



*Forza Motorsport* has long been the premier Xbox racing simulator, offering cutting-edge visuals and deep physics simulation on the asphalt. For this next entry, developer Turn 10 Studios is pulling out all the stops. On Xbox Series X, 4K visuals at 60 frames per second will shine, while real-time ray tracing will let you see competitors and the track reflected in the sheen of your polished paint job. You can count on the traditional roster of hundreds of real-world cars and meticulously re-created tracks, too.

## STATE OF DECAY 3

PUBLISHER XBOX GAME STUDIOS DEVELOPER UNDEAD LABS RELEASE DATE TBD



Undead Lab's *State of Decay* series has stood apart from its zombie-sporting peers due to its more simulation style of gameplay and focus on building and maintaining a community of survivors. We imagine that aspect will play an even bigger role in the upcoming *State of Decay 3*—as will both the zombies and environments that they roam, given the power of the next-generation Xbox and the potential of its SSD storage. We have also gotten two direct hints at what to expect next: seasons (or at least a winter-themed map), and zombie animals.

## FABLE

PUBLISHER XBOX GAME STUDIOS DEVELOPER PLAYGROUND GAMES RELEASE DATE TBD



Lionhead Games' classic *Fable* series was infamous for turning the fantasy genre on its head with a lighthearted take on questing that put player choice front and center. Now, a new studio, *Forza Horizon* creator Playground Games, is taking a crack at reviving *Fable* on the new generation of Xbox consoles. Though details are still scarce, you can expect a sprawling kingdom to explore, tons of control over how your epic adventure plays out, and enough goofy British accents to last you a lifetime.

# MINECRAFT DUNGEONS

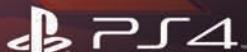
UNITE. FIGHT. SURVIVE.



Fantasy Violence

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## AS DUSK FALLS

PUBLISHER XBOX GAME STUDIOS DEVELOPER INTERIOR/NIGHT RELEASE DATE TBD



*As Dusk Falls* is the debut from INTERIOR/NIGHT, a new studio focused on interactive fiction. The game follows two families in a small Arizona town over 30 years, starting with a robbery gone wrong in 1999. In the spirit of games like *Heavy Rain* (which I/N's founder helped create), your choices will impact the outcome and overall flow of the story. Also of note is the distinctive visual style: a mix of painterly 2D characters and high-quality 3D environments.

## PSYCHONAUTS 2

PUBLISHER XBOX GAME STUDIOS DEVELOPER DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS  
RELEASE DATE 2021



Anyone who played *Psychonauts* knows why it became a cult classic. The 2005 platformer, about a young boy named Raz at a summer camp for training psychic spies, remains one of the most imaginative and hilarious games ever made. Now, in this long-overdue sequel, Raz will once again enter the brains of a variety of colorful characters, with each mindscape offering its own theme, visual style, and challenges—like a psychedelic level featuring the voice talents and musical stylings of Jack Black.

## CROSSFIREX

PUBLISHER SMILEGATE DEVELOPER SMILEGATE, REMEDY ENTERTAINMENT  
RELEASE DATE 2020



*CrossfireX* is taking one of the world's most popular franchises that you've probably never heard of and bringing it to a Western audience in a big way. Based on an online tactical shooter that's had over 1 billion players across Asia, *CrossfireX* modernizes the game in several key areas.

Most notably, *CrossfireX* will feature a single-player campaign created by Remedy Entertainment, the studio behind *Alan Wake* and *Control*. Given the developer's capacity to weave extraordinary tales, that alone makes it worth checking out.

## S.T.A.L.K.E.R. 2

PUBLISHER GSC GAME WORLD DEVELOPER GSC GAME WORLD RELEASE DATE 2021



The *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* games attracted an audience of die-hard fans with their mix of first-person shooter and survival horror elements. Now, with the first numbered sequel, the developers are taking their supernaturally infused take on the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone to the next level. To make it through this massive and deadly open world, you'll need to survive unsettling mutant creatures, cutthroat humans, and otherworldly anomalies that can warp the very nature of reality itself.



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# MONSTER HUNTER RISE

MONHUN ON THE RUN

BY MOLLIE L PATTERSON

## FACT FILE

PUBLISHER

CAPCOM

DEVELOPER

CAPCOM

PLATFORMS

SWITCH

RELEASE DATE

03.26.2021

In its earlier days, Capcom's *Monster Hunter* series grew to be a phenomenon among millions of Japanese players, where the more portable nature of the games made it easy for friends to meet up and slay monsters together.

When *Monster Hunter World* came along in 2017, its name couldn't have been more apropos. Released for modern consoles and pushing online connectivity, the game became a smash hit around the world, as more casual gamers discovered the thrill of the hunt that longtime fans had known for years.

That history of the franchise is what then makes *Monster Hunter Rise* so interesting. Crafted specifically for the Switch, the game isn't just classic portable *Monster Hunter*, nor is it just modern-era console *Monster Hunter*—it's both. What it also isn't is just a port of *Monster Hunter World* for Nintendo's hybrid platform.

"With *Monster Hunter Rise*, our goal was to build an all-new *Monster Hunter* experience for the Nintendo Switch that both our series fans and newcomers alike can enjoy," Capcom senior brand manager

■ Meet the Magnamalo, one of *Monster Hunter Rise*'s new flagship monsters





## A NEWALLY FOR WHEN THINGS GET RUFF

Even on the Nintendo Switch, Capcom's RE Engine is capable of producing some impressive visuals.

Mike Lunn told us, "The core game-play experience in *Monster Hunter Rise* will feel familiar to previous *Monster Hunter* entries, but it also introduces several new and exciting mechanics for hunters to master."

No matter if playing solo, or with up to three other hunters either locally or online, those differences will exist throughout the game. One major change is the Wirebug, a new type of grappling option that's usable anywhere without the need of special

indicators or anchor points.

"The debut of the [Wirebug] mechanic allows for wire-based grappling actions that can be used to scale cliffs and other hard-to-reach areas, providing new traversal and aerial attack options," explained Lunn. "We feel that [it] will be really exciting to use not only in battle, but for getting around and exploring the environments as well."

What isn't changing in *Monster Hunter Rise*, of course, is that

**"Our goal was to build an all-new *Monster Hunter* experience for the Nintendo Switch that both our series fans and newcomers can enjoy."** CAPCOM SENIOR BRAND MANAGER MIKE LUNN

Capcom's *Monster Hunter* series is no stranger to helpful animal friends, with the cat-like Palicos having served as both assistants to players and mascots for the franchise.

In *Monster Hunter Rise*, those friendly felines will have a new rival to compete with: dogs.

"The new canine hunting partners called Palamutes can be personalized and used to ride across and up terrain too, providing players with all-new traversal and attack options," said senior brand manager Mike Lunn.

When playing solo, you won't need to pick between man's best friends, as you can take one Palico and one Palamute along with you. When running multiplayer quests, however, hunters will need to decide which to bring along, weighing the pros and cons of each.

Oh, and don't worry: Capcom didn't forget to consider the most important factor of adding Palamutes to *Monster Hunter Rise*.

"Yes, you can pet the dog," Lunn reassured us.

players will be facing off against a wide variety of fearsome monsters. The team at Capcom is working hard on some ferocious adversaries that'll challenge Hunters in new ways, such as the menacing Magnamalo, the amphibious Tetragnathon, or the shape-changing Aknosom.

Never fear, though—there will be plenty of familiar foes out there waiting for you, too.

"Veteran hunters can rest assured that we'll also be bringing back a number of fan-favorite and other returning species from previous *Monster Hunter* games as well," Lunn said. ☺



preview

# FAR CRY 6

ISLAND TIME

BY JOSH HARMON

## FACT FILE

PUBLISHER

UBISOFT

DEVELOPER

UBISOFT TORONTO

PLATFORMS

XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5,

XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

RELEASE DATE

02.18.2021



★ PREORDER

**P**erhaps more than in any other game series, it's the villains that define *Far Cry*.

Vaas. Pagan Min. Joseph Seed. Now, with *Far Cry 6*, Ubisoft Toronto hopes to add another name to that list: Antón Castillo, the ruthless dictator of Yara, an island nation in the midst of a violent revolution.

"With Antón Castillo we really wanted to create a complex, nuanced character," explained narrative director Navid Khavari. "Despite the brutality of his methods, he fundamentally believes that everything he does is for the greater good. He wants to save his country, and he wants to do it as efficiently as possible."

As Antón fights to keep control over Yara, he's also raising a young son, Diego (portrayed by Anthony Gonzalez). "The humanizing aspect of this father-son relationship is an unexpected twist that elevates the story to a whole new level," Khavari said.

**"The humanizing aspect of this father-son relationship is an unexpected twist that elevates the story to a whole new level."** **NAVID KHAVARI, NARRATIVE DIRECTOR**



To stand against the might of Antón's army, players will take on the role of Dani Rojas, a Yaran local and freedom fighter who can be played as either a man or woman. "If we're going to tell a story about someone in a guerrilla movement, you need to have that personal connection with them," Khavari explained. "You need

■ Will Diego be molded into a ruthless dictator, or will he reject his father's legacy?

someone who's rooted in the world, who has a background."

To help define Yara and its revolution, the developers looked to the past and present of a real Caribbean dictatorship, Cuba, for inspiration. Specifically, the team homed in on what Khavari calls "the unique feeling... of being frozen in time." In the game, this translates to recognizable visuals, like classic cars kept running decades into obsolescence, but it also impacts the weapons and gear at your disposal, which will take on a





## GIANCARLO WHAT-A- TREAT-O

If you're a fan of *Better Call Saul* or *The Mandalorian*, you might recognize *Far Cry 6*'s villain, Antón Castillo. That's because he shares a face with the actor playing him, the always-memorable Giancarlo Esposito. According to narrative director Navid Khavari, Esposito brought much more than a great performance to Antón. He also collaborated closely with the team to flesh out the character.

"When we initially cast Giancarlo, we were lucky enough to fly down to New York to meet with him. He'd already done extensive notes on the character," Khavari said. "He had all sorts of questions to ask about why Antón was doing the things he was doing. What he really pushed and challenged us on was, 'How do we bring empathy to Antón?' There has to be a reason in Antón's eyes to justify his actions."

Esposito's feedback led to the team crafting entirely new scenes, and the partnership didn't stop there. "That's the beauty of the collaboration you get with someone like Giancarlo. It's a conversation back and forth; even on set we were constantly—down to the word—discussing how we can get Antón just right."



makeshift quality. "Antón's army is a well-armed and organized machine, while you are part of a small group of guerrillas with limited ranks and resources," Khavari said.

Fans will recognize series touchstones in *Far Cry 6*—an emphasis on player freedom in combat, animal companions who can fight alongside you—but there's one major element that departs from the status quo. In addition to varied natural terrain, Yara includes a large urban environment: the capital city of Esperanza.

"This is the seat of Antón's power. This is where most of his supporters are, and on a narrative side, you want to feel like you're walking into the lion's den," Khavari explained. "On the gameplay side, the verticality is a complete game-changer. Being able to run across rooftops, use back alleys, fight against some of the toughest opponents in the game in this setting, I think is really unique and fresh. And it completely changes the way the game feels." ©

As a Yaran guerrilla, Dani Rojas must make do with whatever weapons are on hand.

In addition to varied **natural terrain**, Yara includes a large **urban environment**: the capital city of **Esperanza**.



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# STAR WARS: SQUADRONS

GREAT SHOT, KID

BY JOSH HARMON

## FACT FILE

**PUBLISHER**  
ELECTRONIC ARTS  
**DEVELOPER**  
MOTIVE STUDIOS  
**PLATFORMS**  
XBOX ONE, PS4, PC  
**RELEASE DATE**  
10.02.2020

Who hasn't watched the massive space battles of the *Star Wars* movies and dreamed of being an X-wing pilot? Now you can live out that fantasy, courtesy of *Star Wars: Squadrons*, the latest game from EA's Motive Studios.

*Squadrons'* story campaign takes place after the fall of the Emperor at the end of *Return of the Jedi*. Now, the Rebel Alliance has transformed into the New Republic, tasked with hunting down the remnants of the Galactic Empire. In an interesting twist, *Squadrons* places you on both sides of this conflict. For the Republic, you fly as part of Vanguard Squadron, and as an Imperial pilot you join Titan Squadron. Both halves of the campaign are packed with memorable characters that offer a surprising amount of depth and humanity—even if it's clear the Empire are still the bad guys.

The game's take on space combat can be exhilarating, as you weave

through space debris and around massive Star Destroyers trying to line up the perfect shot in each dogfight. Adding particular depth is the ability to manage the power levels to your ship's different systems. Do you prioritize recharging your shields, flying quickly, or keeping your lasers energized? Each decision could have life-or-death consequences.

Be warned, however, that this isn't a pick-up-and-play game, nor are the flying and combat mechanics quite as easy to slide into as, say, the classic *Star Wars Rogue Squadron* games. Unless you're a natural, you'll likely need to put in a decent amount of time to adjust to the controls and hone the instincts you'll need to be effective in multiplayer matches against other players. Going through the campaign first can help, but don't be surprised if your first foray online ends without getting a single kill.

Stick with it, however, and you'll discover that *Squadrons* offers

something remarkably different from other online games. Yes, there's a fairly standard progression system, with XP-based leveling, customizable weapon loadouts for each ship, and cosmetic unlockables. The gameplay itself, however, isn't really like anything else you can find on consoles today. That's doubly true of the Fleet Battles mode, which gives each team an objective: taking out your opponents' massive capital ship. Though it's still only 5-on-5, the addition of AI-controlled ships means the matches are more action-packed, with something close to the rhythm of *League of Legends* or similar MOBA games.

Whether you're interested in experiencing a new chapter of the *Star Wars* saga in the campaign or testing your dogfighting skills as a pilot online, *Star Wars: Squadrons* offers a thrilling and refreshingly uncompromising take on a galaxy far, far away. ☺



***Spending time together as a family,  
that's our way to play.***

Games Shown:



Nintendo Switch Lite plays all games that support handheld mode.  
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**Nintendo**

# parting shots



1 ON 1

## SIMON EBEJER

COO, VICARIOUS VISIONS

If a good game helps define its genre, and a great game helps *redefine* its genre, then a legendary game breaks out beyond the confines of its genre. When *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 1* and *2* launched on the original PlayStation, everyone seemed to be playing them—not just fans of sports games or skateboarding enthusiasts. To this day, they still stand as some of the most beloved video games of all time, and that's why Activision and developer Vicarious Visions have teamed up to remake both games for a new generation. To learn more about what went into getting such classic titles riding the rails again, we hit the skate park with Vicarious Visions COO Simon Ebejer.

**WGC:** Why was now the right time to revisit *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 1* and *2*?

**Simon Ebejer:** This series is beloved among fans and remains one of their top-requested games. Additionally, everything '90s is coming back right now, and new technology has allowed us to give players a truly robust and enhanced gameplay experience. Everything we did for the remastered games is based on what we believe fans and players want out of the franchise.

**WGC:** You had access to some of the original code and level geometry in creating *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 1 + 2*. What were the most interesting things you learned going back to the original games?

**SE:** One of the most interesting things about going back to the original games was how much the gameplay trumped realism with

the geometry. In the originals, because the fidelity could only be so good, it didn't matter much that the basketball hoop in the gymnasium of the school level was five feet across or that you could fit two basketball courts where there was just one huge one. But for us to make a game that looks real in 2020 with the amazing visuals that we have, it took a lot of work to get the scale of things as close to real as we could while still preserving the gameplay.

**WGC:** Why did you decide to update the roster with new skaters, in addition to the classic lineup fans already know and love?

**SE:** The genre-defining *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* franchise made its mark on video games in the '90s touting the top names in skateboarding at the time. They showed gamers and aspiring skateboarders, includ-

## GAME HIGHLIGHTS

DESTINY, CRASH BANDICOOT N. SANE TRILOGY, CALL OF DUTY INFINITE WARFARE, TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8

ing the new list of talent added to the game, what could be possible with the sport.

With the remaster of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 1* and *2*, we wanted to recreate that magic again for players. These new skaters represent where skate culture is today. Not only do they offer players diverse skate styles to choose from in the game, but also a wide range of diversity across several spectrums including gender identity, race, nationality, and more.

Our updated roster contains some of the most preeminent pro skaters in the world today, including Nyjah Huston, Leo Baker, Leticia Bufoni, Aori Nishimura, Lizzie Armento, Shane O'Neill, Riley Hawk, and Tyshawn Jones, who will join the lineup of OG pro skaters from the original series.

**WGC:** One of the most striking updates to *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 1 + 2* is the deep new challenge system. Why did the team feel it was important to implement this feature?

**SE:** We felt the challenge system was important because we wanted the combined package to feel like one game instead of *THPS 1* on one side and *THPS 2* on the other side, where players choose one and progress and then do the next. By giving players the challenge system we were able to unify the game and allow them to accomplish things that feed into their overall progress no matter what mode they are in, whether it's playing through *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 1 + 2*'s tours, playing in Free Skate, online multiplayer, making Create-a-Parks—all of it.

**WGC:** The *Tony Hawk* games have had their fair share of zany guest characters over the years. If you had absolute authority to add a new guest skater from another property to the roster, who would you pick and why?

**SE:** Wow, that's a tough question. Speaking strictly for myself there are a couple that come to mind. Crash Bandicoot would be awesome, and of course Vicarious Visions has strong ties to our buddy Crash—his feet are as big as skateboards themselves though. ☺

**Everything '90s** is coming back right now, and new technology has allowed us to give players a truly robust and enhanced gameplay experience.



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